

An Analysis of Saudi Arabian and U.S. Managerial Coaching Behaviors

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The use of coaching as a way to enhance performance and hone leadership skills is a popular and growing management development strategy (Goldsmith and Lyons, 2005). As with any emerging field, there is considerable ambiguity as to what constitutes effective coaching, the relationship of coaching to other disciplines and the relative value of using external versus internal coaches (Lyons, 2005; Sherman and Freas, 2004). The concept of executive coaching appears to be oriented to the utilization of external coaches helping individual executive clients (Feldman and Lankau, 2005; Stober, 2005), while managerial coaching focuses on the utilization of managers within organizations engaging in helping relation-

ships with their fellow employees (Kouzes and Posner, 2005; Noer, 2005). This exploratory research focused on managerial coaching using participants from Saudi Arabian and U.S. organizations.

Regardless of its orientation, the foundations of coaching seem to be rooted in the modern Western (primarily U.S.) managerial values of participation, accountability, and free choice (Hargrove, 1995; Witworth *et al.*, 1998). However, there has been little empirical research or critical analysis of the specific behaviors involved in the process (Campbell, 1989; Day, 2001; Kilburg, 1996). From a global perspective, there has been no research that has examined the link between coaching behaviors

and culturally defined values and norms outside the U.S. or Western Europe.

In this study, we describe and test a model of managerial coaching with a sample of Saudi Arabian and U.S. managers and examine cultural influences on coaching behaviors. Following a brief explanation of the rationale for the study, we review the literature on coaching and comparative studies of Saudi management culture, and present our hypotheses. The study methodology details the composition of the two samples and the research instruments employed. The analysis and results sections focus on describing the observed differences in coaching behaviors between the two subject groups. Finally, the discussion section presents lessons learned from the research and insights about limitations and possible future directions for continued research in this area.

RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Saudi Arabia is an increasingly important economic and political ally of the United States. The Saudi organization within which this research was conducted is large, multi-faceted, and controls what has been estimated, as a quarter of all the known oil reserves in the world (Ray, 2005). As managers from the Saudi and U.S. cultures continue to interact, an understanding of cultural similarities and differences can facilitate cross-cultural communications and boundary spanning. Recently, Golden and Veiga (2005) developed a cross-cultural boundary spanning model based on five cultural dimensions articulated by Hofstede (1980, 2001), and posited that effective cross-cultural boundary spanning by teams and or-

ganizations necessitates an understanding of these dimensions. This study uses a similar framework to understand coaching behaviors in Saudi and U.S. organizations.

The Saudi organization where this study took place was facing the need to increase efficiency due to rising costs and global competition, manage a growing number of international joint ventures requiring cross-cultural understanding, and deal with a significant reduction of U.S., British, and Canadian expatriate managers due to a government mandated reduction in the number of non-Saudi employees. From a talent management standpoint, the existing performance appraisal, professional development, and succession planning systems were not seen by top management as adequately preparing the organization and its people for these imminent challenges. Seeking to quickly remedy this situation, the organization turned to managerial coaching as an intervention and means to facilitate the necessary employee development in order to contend with the new business climate.

We were unable to discover any evidence of coaching as a management development strategy within other organizations in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and, although our host organization is widely recognized as the most modern and progressive employer in the Kingdom, there was no history of a coaching strategy. Through a consulting relationship with the top executive of this firm, we had the unique opportunity to help create a coaching strategy for management development and, concurrently, pursue research on culturally derived Saudi coaching behaviors.

COACHING AS A HELPING RELATIONSHIP

Coaching has been generally described as a one-on-one approach to facilitate individual learning and behavioral change (Day, 2001; Hall *et al.*, 1999). It involves the use of a wide variety of behavioral methods and techniques to assist a client to achieve personal and/or professional goals (Kilburg, 1996). Some of the more common activities include developing self-awareness, learning and practicing new skills, in-depth role-playing, behavior modeling and intensive feedback. In addition to improving personal performance, Katz and Miller (1996) suggested that coaching could be used to understand and affect any number of important organizational changes, thus improving organizational performance. For any coaching to be effective, it is important that the coach have the ability to establish an authentic connection with the person being coached, or as Peterson and Hicks describe, "forge a partnership" (1996: 29). Quick and Macik-Frey (2004) describe the coaching relationship as one that requires mutual trust and respect, and, from the coach's perspective, a deep insight into the needs and values of the other person. Kilburg (2000) echoed this sentiment by conceptualizing coaching as a helping relationship, and Witworth, Kimsey-House and Sandahl (1998) suggested that coaching would be most effective when the agenda of the person being coached was the sole focus of the coaching relationship. For the purposes of this research, we conceptualize coaching as a client-centered helping relationship that benefits both the individual and the organization.

COMPARATIVE STUDIES OF THE SAUDI MANAGEMENT CULTURE

Compared to other geographic regions, there has been relatively little management research in Arab countries in general, and within Arab countries, even less in Saudi Arabia (Dedoussis, 2004; Robertson *et al.*, 2001). A review of the literature produced no studies on the relationship of the Saudi management culture to coaching behaviors. Given the scant literature base from which to build, we sought to support the relationships between coaching and Saudi culture posited by this study by extending the literature base available from other Saudi managerial studies. Hofstede's (1980) oft-cited classical comparative study provides a useful frame of reference. However, it did not single out Saudi Arabia, but rather bundled it with a group of six other "Arab countries." As Robertson *et al.* (2001) pointed out, there are a number of differences among the management cultures of Middle-Eastern and Arab countries. Bjerke and Al-Meer (1993) attempted to rectify this gap by applying Hofstede's dimensions to a study of Saudi MBA students and managers.

Table 1 compares Bjerke and Al-Meer's results for Saudi Arabian managers with Hofstede's (1997) updated results for U.S. managers. The results indicate that Saudi managers score high on power-distance (comfort and preference for a social distance between hierarchical levels), high on uncertainty-avoidance (need and preference for structure and predictability), relatively high on the dimension of collectivism (group vs. individual orientation), and tend toward the feminine (concern for others and

Table 1
Comparison of Saudi and U.S. Managers

	Saudi Arabia	U.S.
Power-Distance (Range 104 – 11)	High Power-Distance 73	Low Power-Distance 40
Uncertainty Avoidance (Range 112 – 8)	High Uncertainty Avoidance 74	Low Uncertainty Avoidance 46
Individual/Collective (Range 91 – 6)	Low Individualism 44	High Individualism 91
Masculinity/Femininity (Range 112 – 8)	Low/medium Masculinity 43	High/medium Masculinity 62

Source: Saudi data from Bjerke and Al-Meer (1993); U.S. data from Hofstede (1997).

nurturing) orientation on the masculinity/femininity dimension.

From the U.S. perspective, Saudi managers have a seemingly contradictory need for concurrent stratification and equality. Rosinski (2003) attempts to reconcile this incongruity by framing a dimension called "Hierarchy/Equity." He describes such a cultural orientation as one in which "society and organizations must be socially stratified to function properly," and "people are equals who often happen to play different roles" (2003: 55).

Trompenaars (1993) presents another set of cross-cultural comparative lenses that complement those of Hofstede. Although there appear to be some methodological issues (his sample did not include Saudi Arabia, and "Arab" cultural values were generalized from separate samples from Egypt, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates), his findings are nonetheless useful for the context of the present study. He postulates five cultural dimensions of relating to people: (1) universalism versus particularism (the cultural preference for rules or relationships), (2) collectivism versus individualism (group or individual preferences), (3) neutral versus emotional (the range of expressed feelings), (4) diffuse versus specific (the depth and range of managerial involvement), and (5) achievement versus ascription (the method of according status). Managers in the U.S. are reported as showing a preference for universalism, individualism, neutral emotionalism, a specific orientation, and achievement. Saudis are reported as exhibiting the opposite preferences for particularism, collectivism, a tendency toward an emotional orientation, diffusion, and ascription. These opposing preferences

are consistent with the polar dimensions reported by Hofstede (1980), and have implications for establishing effective and culturally compatible coaching relationships.

Saudi Management Cultural Orientations: Past, Collectivist and Hierarchical

The Saudi management culture is heavily influenced by traditional Islamic values and strong tribal and family orientations (Ali, 1995; Assad, 2002; Rice, 2004). When compared to other Islamic cultures, Saudi Arabian managers and employees are reported to be less susceptible to outside influences and more persistent in adhering to traditional values (Robertson *et al.*, 2001). In his classic study, Hall provides an overall sociological perspective for this past orientation:

The Arab looks back six thousand years for his/her own origins. History is used as the basis for almost any modern action. The chances are that Arabs won't start a talk or a speech or analyze a problem without first developing the historical aspects of their subject (1959: 144).

This Saudi collectivist orientation appears to be well supported by research (Ali, 1993; Al-Jafary and Hollingsworth, 1983; Assad, 2002). Loyalty and commitment to the family, the group or the extended family fuels this focus (Ali, 1992; Rice, 2004). Concurrently, Saudi managers demand loyalty, obedience, and seek a social distance from those they manage, which may be partially attributed to authoritarian beliefs in Islamic social systems (Bjerke and Al-Meer, 1993). The hierarchical and paternalistic elements of the culture are attributed to the legacy of the Ottoman system of governance and the influ-

ence of Bedouin tribalism (Ali, 1990; Rice, 2004). Elashmawi and Harris operationalize this orientation in the context of performance appraisal when they characterize the Saudi supervisory orientation as "mentor," and the person receiving the feedback as representing a "child in family" (1998: 177).

A CULTURAL BRIDGE

As has been discussed, the roots and values of executive coaching seem to be anchored in what may appear as Western concepts of participation and free choice. It may, therefore, seem difficult and culturally inappropriate to apply these concepts to the Saudi culture. Ali (1990, 1995), however, argues that the Saudi culture is strongly participative, egalitarian, and sensitive to the beliefs of others. He postulates that Saudi management environments are "polluted by foreign elements" (1995: 26) that block this natural orientation. In an exploration of a model that will bridge cultures, Assad writes:

There is no inherent conflict between the Western model and the Islamic model. The Islamic model stresses a human orientation focusing on such aspects of management as interpersonal and intergroup relations, individual dignity, and personal growth (2002: 74).

Business organizations in Saudi Arabia are currently going through a process referred to as "Saudisation" (Madhi and Barrientos, 2003), a government-mandated reduction in the number of expatriates, with the objective of achieving a workforce employing more Saudis. As a result of Saudisation, the organization from which the Saudi sample for this study was drawn has experienced a substantial reduction in the number of U.S.,

British and Canadian expatriate managers. With the continuing implementation of Saudisation and the subsequent reduction of managers with Western management values, there may be more fertile soil for the hybrid system suggested by Assad to take root. Moreover, with a greater concentration of Saudi national leaders who reflect traditional Saudi cultural values, it becomes imperative to understand the form and context of what constitutes optimal coaching in order to maximally benefit these managers and their organizations.

HYPOTHESES FOR THE CURRENT STUDY

Given the pervasive historical influences which have created, and which sustain, a strong form of Saudi national culture, we propose that the Saudi managers as a group would be more homogeneous in their approach to coaching and thus exhibit less variance in their specific coaching behaviors than would the U.S. group. Based on our analyses of the available literature that indicates Saudi Arabian managers have culturally derived styles that combine traditional (familial and nurturing) and collectivist orientations, it is believed that Saudis would score higher on supportive coaching behaviors than managers in the U.S. Also, because of their preference for hierarchy and high power-distance, it was predicted that Saudi managers would also score higher than U.S. managers on challenging coaching behaviors. Because both the Saudi and the U.S. samples consisted of managers and executives with analytical, technical and engineering backgrounds, no significant difference in assessing coaching behaviors was anticipated. Therefore, a

summary of the present study's formal hypotheses are as follows:

H1: Saudi managers will exhibit less variance (e.g., be more homogeneous as a group) within the supporting and challenging behavioral dimensions, while U.S. managers will exhibit significantly higher variance (e.g., be less homogeneous).

H2: The Saudi sample will exhibit significantly more supporting and challenging behaviors than will the U.S. sample.

H3: There will be no significant differences between groups on scores for the assessing dimension.

METHOD

Participants

The sample consisted of 151 (71 U.S., 80 Saudi Arabian) managers who held upper-middle management positions. All participated in three-day coaching workshops conducted between 2003 and 2004; all of the Saudi workshops took place within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the U.S. workshops were held in the U.S. The Saudi sample was comprised exclusively of males from the petrochemical industry, whereas the U.S. sample included males and females from a variety of industries. As will be discussed later in this article, an initial degree of caution is warranted when comparing these two samples. However, given the exploratory nature of this research, there are certain similarities between the samples that make this comparison useful and appropriate.

Similarity of Levels and Functions. From an organizational hierarchy perspective, the samples were similar in that both consisted exclusively of individuals holding upper-middle management positions. Despite coming from different industries in the U.S. and different organizational

units within the same organization in the Saudi sample, all had similar levels of accountability for the performance of their organization and their people, as well as similar scope and responsibility for the traditional planning, organizing, controlling and directing functions of management.

Technical Orientation of the Businesses. All individuals came from technically-oriented businesses. The Saudi sample was comprised of managers of technical operations such as refining, chemical and petroleum engineering, information systems, software development, and supply chain management. The U.S. sample was primarily made up of managers of information systems, aerospace engineering, systems engineering, software development, and communications technology.

Diverse and Decentralized Nature of the Saudi Organization. Although fitting the generalized description of a "petrochemical company," the lines between its core business and quasi-governmental functions are, in fact, quite blurred. The organization, for example, manages a significant portion of the health care, telecommunications, and energy distribution infrastructure of an entire province. The participants in the coaching workshops came from a variety of relatively self-contained organizational systems and, in this regard, they reflected the same degree of geographical and organizational diversity as the U.S. sample.

Gender Composition of Samples. Although the Saudi sample consisted entirely of males, while the U.S. sample consisted of males and females, a separate study (Noer, in press) using U.S. participants did not reveal a gender effect in coaching behaviors (as measured by the same instrument

used in the current study). Given the demonstrated lack of a gender effect, the U.S. sample was deemed homogeneous in this regard and, as such, appropriate to compare to the all-male Saudi sample.

Western Education of the Saudi Managers. All the Saudi managers were fluent in English, and most had technical undergraduate degrees from U.S. institutions. Many had MBA's or other advanced degrees. This emphasis on, and organizational funding of, "out of Kingdom" education was unique to our client organization and is not typically the case in other Saudi organizations. This had two implications for our research. The first was that there was linguistic and educational compatibility between the U.S. and Saudi samples. The second was that any differences in Saudi coaching behavioral preferences would occur despite U.S. linguistic and cultural familiarity. These differences could be construed as demonstrating the power of Saudi cultural values among a unique group of managers who, compared to their colleagues in other Saudi organizations, were very familiar with the U.S. managerial culture.

The Coaching Behaviors Inventory

At the beginning of their coaching skills workshop, participants completed the *Coaching Behaviors Inventory* (Noer, 2005) to assess their coaching behaviors. This 30-item self-assessment inventory is based on the Triangle Coaching Model (Noer, 2005), which conceptualizes the coaching process as the dynamic interaction of three sets of behaviors: assessing, challenging, and supporting. These dimensions are similar to the dimensions "diagnosis," "coaching," and

"maintenance/support," described in the Individual Coaching for Effectiveness model developed by Personnel Decisions, Inc. (Hellervik *et al.*, 1992). Two primary roots of the triangle model were the client-centered research stream of the Center for Creative Leadership (e.g., McCauley *et al.*, 1998) and the three dimensional interventionist theory (i.e., valid data—free choice—internal commitment), first articulated by Argyris (1973). Each of the three dimensions is purported to have multiple behavioral components. These components and their definitions are listed in Table 2.

Anchor points for each of the thirty items (ten per dimension) range from (1) "*I almost never use this behavior*" to (5) "*I almost always use this behavior*." Scores on each item are summed for the ten items making up each scale. Sample items are "*I help the person I am coaching assess gaps between the way things are and the way he/she wants them to be*" (assessing), "*I help the person I am coaching focus on concrete, actionable behaviors*" (challenging), and "*I make it a point to acknowledge past achievements and successes of the person I am coaching*" (supporting). Dimension scores are calculated by summing the scores of the ten items that comprise that dimension; a maximum score of 50 indicates that a coaching dimension is almost always used, whereas a score of 10 indicates a dimension is almost never used. For this study, internal consistency reliability analyses of the dimensional scales produced Cronbach's α 's (.81 for assessing, .79 for challenging, and .67 for supporting) that indicated strong internal consistency.

Table 2
Triangle Coaching Model Dimensions

<p>Assessing: using analytical processes that lead to measurement and goal-setting. The behavioral components are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data gathering – collecting information that will be of use to the person being coached. • Gap analysis – utilizing the difference between the current reality and the desired future state to develop action plans. • Goal setting – helping the person being coached develop concrete plans to meet desired objectives. • Measurement/Feedback – establishing criteria to assess progress against goal achievement and developing mechanisms for feedback of behavioral changes.
<p>Challenging: stimulating the person being coached to confront obstacles, re-conceptualize issues, and move forward with energy and self-reliance. The four behavioral components are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confronting – helping the person being coached face and understand issues, behaviors, or perceptions that are blocking him or her. • Focusing/Shaping – moving the coaching interaction from the general to the specific, toward concrete, actionable outcomes. • Re-framing – helping the person being coached examine and validate his or her assumptions and inferences. This involves helping him or her discover alternative interpretations of the data used to form conclusions. • Empowering/Energizing – helping the person being coached develop an increased sense of purpose, energy, and self-reliance.
<p>Supporting: creating an interpersonal context that facilitates trust, openness, respect and understanding. The five behavioral components are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attending – using body language, voice tone, eye contact, and physical setting to reduce defensiveness and create an open, trusting coaching environment. • Inquiring – asking questions to elicit information, clarify perspectives, and promote understanding. • Reflecting – promoting clarity and demonstrating by the coach stating, in his or her own words, what he or she thinks the person being coached is saying or feeling. • Affirming – communicating that the coach believes the person being coached has the ability to learn, change, or develop. • Airtime – managing the coaching conversation so as to allow the person being coached to have ample opportunity to reflect and express his or her feelings.

Source: Noer (2005).

RESULTS

Prior to hypothesis testing, each scale was examined to ensure participants' dimension scores were normally distributed. Separate analyses of the scales for U.S. and Saudi samples found no major violations of this assumption. Each coaching dimension is comprised of four or five specific subscales. The means and stan-

dard deviations of the assessing, challenging, and supporting dimensions and their respective subscales can be found in Table 3.

To test the first hypothesis, that Saudi managers would be more homogeneous as a group than U.S. managers in their coaching styles, the separate standard deviations and variances for each group's dimension

Table 3
Means and Standard Deviations for Supporting, Challenging,
and Assessing Scale Scores and Subscale Scores

	Saudi		U.S.	
	M	SD	M	SD
Assessing	33.04	5.43	33.11	6.21
Data Gathering (3 items)	9.26	1.99	9.28	2.12
Gap Analysis (2)	6.99	1.35	6.89	1.63
Goal Setting (3)	10.46	1.90	11.00	2.40
Measurement/Feedback (2)	6.33	1.79	6.49	1.71
Challenging	37.72	4.44	35.49	5.86
Confronting (4)	15.43	2.32	15.02	2.49
Focusing/Shaping (2)	7.61	1.04	7.53	1.40
Reframing (2)	7.39	1.25	6.96	1.57
Empowering/Energizing (2)	7.29	1.12	6.72	1.29
Supporting	41.11	3.42	36.79	4.93
Attending (2)	8.75	.95	8.17	1.39
Inquiring (2)	8.43	1.08	7.81	1.28
Reflecting (2)	7.53	1.31	6.09	1.85
Affirming (2)	8.28	1.22	8.17	1.39
Airtime (2)	8.13	1.34	7.11	1.78

scores for assessing, challenging, and supporting behaviors were examined. A series of Levene's tests for equality of variances was performed to compare the relative variance of each group on each scale. A statistically significant difference was not found at the $p = .05$ level when comparing the groups on the Assessing scale ($F = 1.99$, ns). Results indicated that the U.S. managers exhibited significantly more variance than did Saudis on the Challenging ($F = 4.66$, $p < .05$) and Supporting ($F = 12.05$, $p < .01$) scales, thus indicating that Saudis were indeed substantially more homogeneous as a group in their ratings. As such, this pattern of differ-

ences provides strong support for the hypothesis that Saudi leaders, perhaps due to their strong past, collectivist and hierarchical orientations, are more homogeneous compared to U.S. leaders who, due to their individualistic culture, are more varied in their coaching styles.

As the predicted differences in group variances were statistically significant for the supporting and challenging scales, the resulting heterogeneity of variance necessitated nonparametric methods for subsequent scale comparisons by group. To test the hypotheses that the Saudi managers would score relatively higher on both of these scales than

would U.S. managers, Mann-Whitney U analyses were performed. For the supporting scale, results indicated that the mean rank for Saudi (94.64) managers was considerably higher than that for U.S. (55.00) managers and this difference achieved statistical significance ($U = 1349$, $z = -5.58$, $p < .01$). Follow-up analyses on the supporting dimension sub-dimensions (data for all sub-dimension analyses was available for 46 U.S. and all 80 of the Saudi participants) revealed that the Saudi sample scored significantly higher than the U.S. sample on all but affirming behaviors (attending, $U = 1453.00$, $z = -2.23$, $p < .05$; inquiring, $t_{125} = -2.96$, $p < .01$; reflecting, $U = 1043.00$, $z = -4.27$, $p < .01$; airtime, $U = 1254.00$, $z = -3.19$, $p < .01$). As such, one can infer that Saudi managers consistently demonstrate more frequent behaviors across the broad general supporting dimension. Similar results were found when comparing the groups' scores for the Challenging scale. The mean ranks for Saudi and U.S. managers were 84.01 and 66.98, respectively, and this difference was statistically significant ($U = 2199.5$, $z = -2.39$, $p < .05$). Further analyses of the challenging sub-dimensions revealed that this overall difference was primarily driven by the empowering sub-dimension, as it was the only one in which the Saudi group was (statistically) significantly higher ($t_{125} = -2.60$, $p < .05$). Since the homogeneity of variance assumption was not violated with regard to the assessing dimension, group means rather than ranks were compared to determine differences on the assessing scale. An independent samples t test indicated no statistically significant difference at the $p = .05$ criterion ($t_{149} = .08$, ns) between the Saudi ($M = 33.04$) and U.S. ($M =$

33.11) group means. In summary, the pattern of results lend clear support to the hypotheses that the Saudi sample would exhibit less overall variance as a group in their coaching behaviors, and that they would exhibit significantly more supporting and challenging behaviors than their U.S. counterparts.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study provide strong evidence of differences in coaching styles between U.S. and Saudi managers. More specifically, the general pattern of coaching behaviors appears to support the more general managerial orientations outlined in past comparative cultural studies. One key finding was that, compared to the U.S. sample, the Saudi sample as a whole exhibited significantly less variance in their coaching behaviors. This pattern of consistency, which could alternatively be conceived as a greater unwillingness to depart from the norm, is a likely outcome of a management style heavily influenced by Islamic culture. Hofstede's (1997) findings that Saudi managers were much more inclined to both avoid uncertainty and adopt a collectivist orientation might well predict that they would have a more consistent, less individualistic style when it came to coaching others. This consistency is congruent with the findings of Robertson *et al.* (2001) that, when compared to other Islamic cultures, Saudis are more persistent in adhering to traditional values. Likewise, the cultural values of obedience, loyalty, and beliefs grounded in an Islamic social system (Ali, 1990; Assad, 2002; Rice, 2004) give further perspective on the reasons Saudi managers display more

homogeneity than their U.S. counterparts.

As hypothesized, Saudi managers reported using more supportive coaching styles and behaviors than did the U.S. sample. The preference for using these more relationship-based, nurturing behaviors would be in line with Hofstede's (1997) finding that the Saudi culture tends to be more feminine, a construct that embodies a focus on establishing and preserving relationships in contrast to the more distant, task-orientation taken by U.S. managers. Trompenaars's (1993) findings that Saudis exhibit a greater emotional orientation and prefer ascription to achievement can similarly help explain this finding.

The significant difference between the Saudi and the U.S. samples on the challenging dimension appears to be based on a combination of Saudi orientations toward collectivist traditions and hierarchy (e.g., ascribed status). Most interesting was the finding that the empowering sub-dimension appeared to have a tremendously greater impact than did the other sub-dimensions. However, when one considers the various ways in which a coach can move another person to action in a constructive way, empowering could arguably be described as having the greatest potential for establishing an emotional connection with the other person. While enabling others to reframe issues, re-focus efforts, and confront obstacles are all helping behaviors, empowering and energizing better lend themselves to emotional appeals and the generation of the most positive affect. In a culture where a premium is placed on ascription and respect, empowering may very well yield the greatest impact.

In terms of assessing behaviors, as expected, no differences were observed between the two samples. Since participants in both samples were high-level managers in professional fields with substantial accountability for the performance of their organizations and people, one would expect both samples to exhibit similar levels of goal setting and performance measurement and feedback. Considering the heavy technical and analytical professional orientation of both samples, it is interesting that the mean scores for assessing coaching behaviors were the lowest of the three sets of behaviors. One possible explanation may be that both groups saw coaching as a "soft" skill and, as such, an activity that did not lend itself to an objective, analytical, approach. A corollary explanation could be that objective, analytical processes transcend cultural influences, whereas the human interactions involving supporting and challenging behaviors are more susceptible to cultural influences. Future research may shed some light on this phenomenon. However, what is important to take from these results is that Saudi managers are in no way less focused on the more technical side of assessing behaviors. In other words, while their coaching behaviors may be more supportive and challenging, Saudi managers are equally as focused as U.S. managers when it comes to quantifiably gauging others' performance and development.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Further research both in cross-cultural coaching and in other dimensions of leadership is very important to equip managers with the necessary

skills and understanding to operate more effectively in a global environment. In addition to providing useful information and guidance for enhancing Saudi Arabian and U.S. coaching behaviors, the current study adds to the relative dearth of cross-cultural literature on the topic of coaching and effective managerial helping behaviors. While the present study's results are promising and a major step in better understanding cross-cultural differences in managerial coaching, the exploratory nature of this research brings with it some methodological limitations. By acknowledging the cautions below, future research may build upon these findings to further extend this currently narrow, yet important, field of study.

Our rationale for the comparability of the samples was in part based on the fact that, although it was in the petrochemical industry, the Saudi organization was noted for its Western management orientation and was considerably more diverse and decentralized (i.e., more similar to U.S. organizations) than other Saudi organizations. In essence, this, coupled with the fact that the Saudi managers' education and business philosophy could be described as more Westernized, actually increased internal validity by minimizing non-cultural factors which may have potentially biased results. It could be argued that, were a sample employed representing more typical Saudi organizations, the results may have been different. However, the inclusion of additional and more diverse Saudi organizations, in terms of both industry and management philosophy, is essential to formally test this assumption. As the U.S. sample came primarily from techni-

cal backgrounds as well, a similar call for diversity in sampling is merited.

Although there does not appear to be significant differences between U.S. male and female coaching behavioral preferences (Noer, *in press*), the lack of females in the Saudi sample represents a limitation to the generalizability of this research within Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia, with only 11 percent of women in the workforce, ranks lowest in a survey of 12 Arab countries (Nydell, 2006). Of this 11 percent, a much smaller percentage can be presumed to be occupying managerial roles. This small sample size and related accessibility issues make follow-on gender oriented research within Saudi Arabia challenging. Future researchers may find more fertile ground in Arab countries with a larger percentage of women in the workforce or among Arab women employed in the U.S.

There are significant cultural differences between Arab countries, and Saudi Arabia is seen by many as the most conservative Arab nation (Nydell, 2006). Since the non-U.S. sample for this study consisted of Saudi managers, caution must be used in generalizing the results to other Arab countries. Future research comparing coaching behaviors between other Arab countries and between those countries and the U.S. would be most helpful in this regard.

One potential limitation of this study was the use of self-report data at a single point in time. As such, the typical threats associated with survey research such as social desirability, response set biases, and other demand characteristics are present. Future research might examine subordinates' perceptions of their managers' actual coaching behaviors and compare these behaviors to their preferences.

Table 4
Comparison of Saudi and U.S. Managers

Saudi	U.S.	Trompenaars' "Advice" re-phrased as Tips for Coaching in a Saudi Arabian Environment
Preference for Particularism	Preference for Universalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on relationships. • Prepare for personal "meandering."
Preference for Collectivism	Preference for Individualism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patience for time outside the coaching dyad for external consultation. • Frame individual coaching in desired collective outcomes.
Tendency toward Emotional	Tendency toward Neutral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid detached, objective, and cool demeanor. • Don't be put off with close interpersonal space and touching.
Preference for Diffuse	Preference for Specific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect a person's title, age, background, and family. • Expect and don't be put off with an overlap between personal and business issues.
Preference for Ascription	Preference for Achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be sensitive to an unwillingness to challenge people with higher authority. • Don't threaten the ascribed status of the person you are coaching.

Source: Trompenaars (1993).

This would not only provide another measure of coaching behaviors, but also serve as a measure of the degree to which culture determines subordinates' assessment of effective helping behaviors.

Implications for Application

These findings can be helpful to both Saudi and U.S. managers seeking to establish more authentic and productive coaching and overall interpersonal relationships. It is impor-

tant that managers in both cultures understand the relationship of culture and coaching behaviors. In this regard, Table 4 summarizes Trompenaars' dimensional preferences and rephrases his "advice" as coaching tips in a Saudi environment.

For U.S. managers attempting to engage in authentic coaching relationships with their Saudi colleagues, understanding the need to ground their efforts in personal relationships and collective, rather than individual, outcomes can facilitate more produc-

tive coaching processes. Many of the "tips" in Table 4—respecting another's ascribed status, allowing for less personal space, and engaging in more personal "meandering"—are essentially correlates or versions of broader attending behaviors. Reciprocally, awareness by Saudis that their U.S. counterparts prefer a more emotionally neutral orientation and are more prone to challenge those with higher authority can be helpful when planning a client-centered helping relationship. Authentically engaging in a helping relationship with someone who exhibits different cultural values, and to some extent polar, can be an against-the-grain experience. Awareness by managers in both cultures of the significant differences in supporting and challenging behavioral preferences can help ameliorate cross-cultural coaching shock.

For example, U.S. managers should be flexible and prepared for what may seem like abrupt shifts from collegial to authoritarian perspectives during coaching conversations with their Saudi counterparts. Reciprocally, Saudi managers should be aware that their greater preferences for challenging and supporting behaviors, and the ease with which they switch between the two sets of behaviors, might confuse their U.S. colleagues. Saudi managers can expect that their U.S. counterparts will spend less time on supporting behaviors. Whereas the Saudi manager may spend time on supporting behaviors, the U.S. manager will display a pref-

erence for "getting down to business." Therefore, when coaching U.S. managers, Saudis may find it helpful to move more quickly through attending behaviors than they would with their Saudi colleagues.

Although the context of this study was managerial coaching behaviors, there are broader implications for cross-cultural communication outside of a formal coaching environment. The supporting behaviors of attending, inquiring, reflecting, and affirming are foundations of basic interpersonal communication, and U.S. managers could stand to benefit from practice and behavioral rehearsal of these skills prior to attempting to communicate with their Saudi counterparts. Saudi and U.S. managers are operating in an increasingly politicized environment, that, when combined with the continuing implementation of Saudisation and an increasing dependence on Saudi oil, necessitates even more authentic and accurate cross-cultural managerial communications. The fundamental Islamic values of participation, equality, and respect for others (Ali, 1990, 1995; Assad, 2002) are compatible with the values underlying U.S. coaching approaches (Argyris, 1973) and, thus, have the potential to serve as a conduit for deeper and more authentic mutual understanding. The coaching behaviors measured in this exploratory study represent a means to facilitate this communication.

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